

## After The Fact by ImposterSins

**Category:** Stranger Things (TV 2016)

**Genre:** Billy isn't flayed, Billy isn't involved in any of the action, Canon-Typical Violence, Description of Injuries, Established Relationship, Harringrove, Hurt/Comfort, I Wrote This Instead of Sleeping, Injury, M/M, Minor Injuries, Not Beta Read, Protective Billy Hargrove, Sad with a Happy Ending

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**Characters:** Billy Hargrove, Steve Harrington

**Relationships:** Billy Hargrove & Steve Harrington, Billy Hargrove/Steve Harrington

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**Summary:**

“Holy shit, Steve, what the hell happened to you?”

Steve was hyperconscious of the fact that he looked like absolute hell. His eye was swollen shut, his nose was most likely broken, and his lip was so cut up that he knew it would leave a nasty scar. The blood made it worse, covering his face and clothes like something out of a cheap horror film. His appearance mixed with the smell of blood, sweat, and most likely vomit made it clear that this was probably the worst night of his life.

“I’ve had a rough night.”

or Steve arrives home late at night after the events at the Starcourt Mall to find Billy waiting for him.

## After The Fact

It was finally over.

Starcourt Mall was up in flames, the gate was closed, and the Mind Flayer was dead.

Steve watched as the military had finally arrived at the scene, storming into the mall towards the underground Russian facility. As the scene played out in front of him, Steve could finally take a moment, only a moment, to breathe. The world seemed to blur around him as the fire trucks and ambulances arrived, eyes (well, his one eye that wasn't swollen shut) moving rapidly as he made sure the kids were safe, as safe as they could be, and accounted for.

Robin stood next to him, her eyes fixated on the entrance to the mall. They had both been through a *lot* and now that the adrenaline had worn off and they were able to just stand still, he could tell the shock was setting in. He couldn't bring himself to say a word, just wrapping his arms around her and hugging her tight. They made it out alive and that was all that mattered for now. It was all they could afford to focus on for now.

As he looked around at everyone, it only took a minute before he realized that Hopper was the only one that he didn't see exit the building with the others, searching the crowd for him to no avail. It didn't take long for the harsh reality of what that meant hit him, but he felt almost numb to the information, knowing it would hit him a lot harder once he was at home and alone in his room. Everything would hit him after the shock wore off and he slept for a while.

He wasn't aware of how much time had passed before he heard a distant voice, someone explaining to him that he needed to get home, registering that someone was giving them both a ride back to their homes. All he could do was nod, his body on autopilot as his mind tried to keep up. He pulled himself from Robin, giving her a hopefully reassuring smile before heading towards the waiting car. The only sound the entire drive was the car radio, playing some tune he couldn't quite place, but it was most likely a Top 40. The music felt so out of place right now, far too normal for a time like this. The

car stopped at Robin's place first, letting her out as she told him that she would call him in the morning, and all he could do was give another forced smile and a small nod. He knew that tomorrow would be worse for both of them, but at least they didn't have to go through it alone.

He found himself thinking, not for the first time, that he was lucky that his parents were never home. Between business trips and spontaneous vacations on his father's weekends off, it was practically like living alone. Not that he minded at all, especially in times like these. If they had been home, and god forbid waiting up for him when they noticed he hadn't come home in who knows how many days now, he knew that he wouldn't know how to respond to any of their questions or what excuse to even give.

Once the car pulled to a halt outside of his own house, he muttered a small thanks to whatever government official had taken the liberty to drive them before pulling himself out of the backseat. He noticed how everything in him ached, able to forget until now. As soon as he shut the door behind himself, the car quickly started heading back the way it came, down the dimly lit street. He allowed himself to watch until it disappeared, finally turning to head towards his house and hopefully his bed. As he turned around, the first thing he noticed was a light on in the house. He hadn't left it on, to his knowledge, and there was absolutely no way his parents would be back so soon. The second thing he noticed was the familiar blue Camaro parked in his driveway. *Fuck.*

He had made a habit of leaving the sliding door unlocked whenever his parents were out of town so that his boyfriend could come and go as he pleased, knowing how shit his home life was and wanting to offer him solace whenever he might need it. He was normally glad when Billy showed up unannounced, almost always looking forward to seeing him, but today was just not the day for it. He stopped just outside of the front door to weigh all of his options. He couldn't avoid going inside, not having his car or any way to contact someone to pick him up.

He couldn't stay outside forever, even if it was better than facing Billy like this. He knew he would have to figure out an excuse, but his mind was mostly static, hardly able to hold a thought. He took a

deep breath to steady himself before he pushed the door open, turning to lock it behind himself. He stayed facing the door for another quiet moment, hoping with everything in him that Billy didn't hear him enter so that he could sneak up to his room, but he had never been very lucky when he needed it.

"You finally showed up, Harrington. It's the middle of the damn night, was there some party I didn't hear about?" Billy asked, smirk clear in his voice as he raised himself from the couch to head towards Steve at the door. Steve didn't reply, still just trying to come up with an excuse, *any excuse at all*.

It took another moment before he was able to force himself to turn around, finally facing Billy. Billy, who always looked absolutely stunning, still dressed in his red swim trunks and lifeguard tank top. He quickly realized that he must have been here since he got off work hours ago, wondering where the hell Steve was, probably getting worried as it got later and later.. He didn't miss the way the shit-eating grin slipped off of Billy's face at the sight of him, the man looked equally shocked and concerned. "Holy shit, Steve, what the hell happened to you?" he managed to ask, breaking his stunned silence.

Steve was hyperconscious of the fact that he looked like absolute hell. His eye was swollen shut, his nose was most likely broken, and his lip was so cut up that he knew it would leave a nasty scar. The blood made it worse, covering his face and clothes like something out of a cheap horror film. His appearance mixed with the smell of blood, sweat, and most likely vomit made it clear that this was probably the worst night of his life.

"I've had a rough night." Steve told him obviously, unable to find better words to explain the situation with Billy's blue eyes looking right at him, concern and anger apparent on his face. Even if he had come up with a lie, he knew Billy would see right through him in an instant. They knew each other too well at this point, and Steve was never good at lying in the first place.

He still didn't know exactly how it had all happened. He remembered the night of their fight at the Byers' house, during all of the chaos in October of the year prior. Steve didn't have a good track

record with fights. All the fights he had been in had been because he started them, but he was never the one to finish them. Billy was much stronger than he was, bashing his face in until he passed out.

When he woke up in the back of Billy's car, the kids explained that Max had "knocked some sense into him." what that meant, he still didn't know, but whatever it was seemed to work. Not even a week later, Billy showed up at his own door to *apologize* for everything that happened that night. Steve didn't know what to do aside from forgive him, and the two were suddenly on decent terms.

They had started hanging out soon after that day. Not often at first, but by mid-November, it was odd to catch the two of them apart. It was all strictly platonic until December rolled around, it all naturally progressed into Billy confessing his feelings for him, which he obviously returned, and they had been together ever since.

Steve's train of thought was broken when Billy snapped his fingers in front of his face, blinking as his mind tried to catch up to his words. "Are you still in there, Harrington?" Billy was asking, concern more apparent on his face now after Steve didn't seem to hear anything he was saying. "Yeah, shit.. Repeat what you said?" he asked, moving his hand to run over his face, but wincing at the touch a second later.

"I asked you what the hell happened and you went all vacant on me." Billy told him, furrowing his eyebrows. "Who the fuck did this to you?" he asked next, anger more present now. It wasn't aimed at Steve, but at whoever did this to him. He could tell Billy was getting ready to storm out of the house without thinking, to find whoever it was and bash their face in without a second thought.

"Billy, calm down." Steve told him instead, resting his hands on Billy's shoulders and looking at him. "I'm fine now, alright? What happened doesn't matter." he added, and how he wanted that to be true. He knew it would keep him up at night, at least for a while. It normally took a month or two for him to get back to sleeping properly, but it never lasted long, he doubted it ever would. He wasn't selfish enough to believe that he had it worse than any of the others, he knew he got off easy compared to Will or the other kids, but that didn't make it less hard. They lived in a nightmare that seemed to never end, each time thinking they had fixed things. He

hoped that this time they were right.

Billy looked at him like he was stupid, clearly not willing to just drop it. "Steve, someone beat the shit out of you. Just give me a name and I'll take care of them for you." he told him, blue eyes studying just how rough his injuries actually were. He didn't know which part was the last straw, maybe it was the exhaustion mixed with Billy's worry, but he gave a weak smile as tears filled his eyes. "I just want to take a shower and lay down." he told him quietly.

Billy looked just as shocked as before, not having an answer. He had never seen Steve cry before, but now was probably the perfect time to break that rule. Billy managed a slow nod. "We can talk after you shower." he told him stubbornly, not willing to let something like this go. Steve admired it, how much Billy cared about him, wanting to take care of him in the way he knew how to. It made his heart ache.

Steve couldn't do anything but nod, heading upstairs and towards his bathroom. It felt good to strip off the Scoops uniform that he had been stuck in, deciding he would probably burn it later. Not like he needed it anymore, since the mall was gone. He caught sight of himself in the mirror, wincing at his own appearance. His face was fucked, but his stomach looked just as bad. Most of the punches he had taken had been straight to the gut, cuts and bruises of all different colors standing out against his pale skin. He grabbed painkillers from the medicine cabinet, taking them quickly and hoping they would kick in soon.

He managed to tear his eyes away from himself and step in the shower, the warm water stinging at first but it started to soothe his pain soon after. He washed the blood off of his face and hair, that alone making him feel a thousand times better already. He pulled himself out of the shower, brushing his teeth and drying his hair, but not caring enough to style it for once.

He wrapped a towel around himself before heading to his bedroom. He hadn't considered bringing clothes with him to the bathroom, which would have been smartest, but he couldn't find it in himself to care. It wasn't like Billy wouldn't see how bad it was sooner or later.

He looked to Billy, who was already sitting on his bed in a pair of his

sweatpants, an expression that could only be described as pure horror at the sight of his bare chest and back. He tried not to flinch under his gaze, pulling out a long sleeve shirt and a pair of sweats, tugging them on. "Caught you staring, pervert." he tried to joke, to tease his way back into a somewhat normal evening with him.

But Billy didn't smirk, or laugh, or tell him to shut up. The night was even more fucked than he thought. "Stevie, please tell me what happened." Billy tried to encourage him, resting a hand on Steve's arm when he sat beside him on the bed. "You look like death, that doesn't just happen.."

Steve managed a weak smile, trying not to get teary with Billy here. He laid his head on his boyfriend's shoulder, ignoring the pain that came with the action. "If I told you, you wouldn't believe me. It's best if we just drop it.. He won't bother me again." he tried to assure him, only receiving a frown in return. "I'm listening to whatever you have to say. I'll believe you." and *God*, Billy held out his pinky to him to promise. It was a small, someone childish gesture, but it made Steve feel better as they linked their pinkies together.

The hardest part was figuring out where to start and what information he should actually tell him. None of it was believable, but some of it was a lot harder to swallow than the rest. He figured telling him about the Russians would be enough.

"Robin, Dustin, and I intercepted a secret Russian code that was being broadcast over Dustin's Cerebro.. Radio thing. We spent the afternoon translating the code, mostly Robin with that part, but we found out that they had a secret base underneath Startcourt Mall." Steve told him honestly, voice showing how sincere he really was, taking Billy's silence as a sign to go on. "We broke into the base, but things didn't go to plan. They took Robin and I hostage and they-" he swallowed as the thought of it hit him, a lot worse now that he wasn't there. Billy slid his hand into Steve's at his hesitation, giving a reassuring squeeze to comfort him the best he could. "They tortured us for information, which we didn't have. They assumed we were spies or some shit.. That's why I look like this." he told him, forcing himself to pull back from Billy's shoulder so that he could look at his expression.

Billy's brow was furrowed, obvious that he was listening but that he was also trying to wrap his head around all of the information Steve had just thrown at him. "Steve, that's.." he started slowly, looking at his face again. "You're not fucking with me, right? You wouldn't fuck with me about this.." he added slowly, to which Steve simply shook his head. "I know it sounds unbelievable, but you know I can't lie to you. This shit actually happened." a laugh escaped him, though it was mostly sad.

Billy looked at him, leaning in to press a reassuring kiss to Steve's not abused cheek. "What happened next?" he asked lightly, causing Steve to relax some. He was happy Billy was willing to believe him at all. "Dustin and Erica- uh, Erica Sinclair, Lucas' little sister.." he added for context. "Broke us out. It's all a blur after that.." he mumbled, the only lie he could manage. "Hopper called the government who sent in the military to infiltrate the base, and the Russians blew up the machine they had been storing and.. Basically, the mall blew up." he finished, searching Billy's face closely.

Billy was silent before he nodded slightly, pulling himself from the bed. Steve watched him, scared that he was leaving before he watched Billy turn on the television set he had in his room, flipping the channels until he landed on the news. There were already reporters outside of Starcourt, showing the building that was still burning in the background in clear view. "Fuck, Steve.. You're not lying." Billy told him, horrified look returning to his face as he shut the television back off, moving back to the bed.

Steve let Billy wrap his arms around him, giving a nod and pressing against his chest closely. "I try not to lie to you.. This was too fucked up to lie about." he told him sadly, still trying to hold his emotions together. Billy hushed him quietly, the softer side of his boyfriend in full view. Billy was only truly relaxed when they were alone, and he even allowed himself to show Steve his gentle side when needed. It was nice.

"Stevie, it's okay. God, you're safe here.." Billy told him, voice quiet as his hand moved to run through Steve's hair. That was all it took before Steve started crying against him, unable to hold back anymore. It was all so much. The Russian facility, the Mind Flayer, Hopper.. He hadn't let himself cry over any of this any of the times



they happened, every tear spilling out for everything in the past three years.

Billy held onto him as tightly as he could without hurting him. "You can cry, I've got you. I'm not going anywhere, I'm here for you." he assured quietly, just holding his boyfriend as he sobbed against his bare chest. It made Steve feel safe, like nothing could get them now.

He cried until he was completely out of tears, face still pressed to Billy's chest as he took shaky breaths to control himself. He managed to pull back enough to look up at Billy again, the man meeting his eyes with that blinding smile that only he got to see. Not a smirk, or a grin, but a genuine smile.

"Thank you, Billy.. I really needed that." Steve admitted, moving his hands to wipe the final tears from his eyes. "Don't thank me. I'm here for you, whenever you need me." Billy promised him, leaning in to press a kiss to Steve's forehead. It was jarring how soft it was; the touches, the words, and the smile. Steve let out another shaky breath before speaking. "I love you, Billy." he admitted softly. He had realized that he loved him far too long ago, but it never felt like the right time to say it. Now wasn't any better, but he just needed him to know it.

Billy looked surprised at the admission before his smile grew slightly. "I love you too, Stevie." he assured him, linking their pinkies together again in a silent promise. "I know it's going to be rough, but you need to try and get some sleep, okay? You've had a long couple of days and you need rest. We can talk more tomorrow, okay?"

Steve nodded slightly, knowing there was no use in arguing with him. He was glad when Billy didn't move to turn the light off, needing it on for at least tonight. He managed to close his eyes. Normally he wouldn't be able to sleep for a while after this, but he felt safe in Billy's arms.

"Goodnight, Billy."

"Goodnight, Stevie."

Steve was actually able to get some rest.

**Author's Note:**

Just a short concept I thought of/wrote at 7am with  
no sleep and haven't double checked  
I haven't written a fic in at least five years, please be  
nice♥